

BAGWORMS

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Bagworms, a relatively new insect pest in northern Illinois, can cause severe damage to many evergreens including arborvitae, chamaecyparis, some cedars, fir, junipers, pine, etc., and deciduous trees including apple, baldcypress, birch, maple, oak and others. Newly hatched caterpillars appear in spring but are well camouflaged by plant foliage. They can easily spread long distances through the air with wind currents, constantly finding new plant hosts. Young caterpillars up to ¼" long feed on surface layers of plant leaves which cause a lighter coloration to occur and the initial damage appears minimal. The foliage, however, will soon turn brown. The most severe damage is caused when caterpillars enlarge and mature. They can be up to 1" long and are able of consuming entire needles and leaves. Damage usually starts at the top of plants and gradually moves downward. Entire branches can be defoliated leading to their death, and the entire tree or shrub may die if action is not taken to control the problem.



It is possible to apply an insecticide such as **BT**, GardenTech's **Sevin®**, or Bonide's **Eight®** if the young larvae are discovered early enough. The best time is when Japanese Tree Lilacs are in bloom. Multiple applications may be required & spraying should be thorough; *always follow the manufacturer's explicit directions*. If chemical control is not achieved in summer, maturing caterpillars become resistant to pesticides. If accessible, the more obvious browned bags can be picked off plants and destroyed or disposed of in a practical and permanent manner. Examine plants very carefully to make sure all bags and the silky bands which attach them to twigs are fully removed. If not removed, the silk bands could cause eventual girdling damage to branches.

While male insects become flying moths that mate with females to produce offspring, the females remain enclosed in their protective sac with the potential of producing from 500 to 1000 eggs before their death. Eggs overwinter in the sacs left on trees, and caterpillars will emerge in spring to start a new round of damage.